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"MAKERS OF HISTORY IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY."
CLOSING ADDRESS, DECEMBER 7th, 1910.

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ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

BY

THE AMERICAN AMBASSADOR.

UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM.
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BY

WHITELAW REID.

HARRISON AND SONS, PRINTERS.
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ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM, DECEMBER 7th, 1910.

A recent essay on Dr. Johnson, by Mr. Shorter, began with the remark, "We may talk about him, and praise him, because we shall be the better for so doing; but we shall certainly say nothing new about him."

You have done me the great honour to ask from me the closing address in the course you have provided on Makers of History; and have assigned to me that particular history-maker out of your interesting and suggestive list to whom we may apply Mr. Shorter's remark with the utmost emphasis. Libraries have been written about him. His devoted and accomplished Secretaries prepared a monumental work, telling all it seemed proper that the public should be told of him and of his great days as seen from the

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White House. A kind of inferior Boswell, but more communicative and even less fastidious, appeared in the person of his own partner in his Illinois law-office. Senators and Representatives in Congress vied with each other in biographies and eulogies. Every clerk that served him, every politician that gained access to him, every civilian soldier that owed him promotion or pardon, the very employés in the Departments, the Captains of tens or hundreds in the remoter party organizations, and, of course, the members of the Press, who in pursuit of their duty followed his footsteps and guessed at his purposes—all felt bound to record and generally to publish their facts and their observations. The statesmen and the press of all nations first laughed at him, then studied him, analyzed him, weighed and estimated him; and at the end the civilized world paid him homage. Certainly we shall be the better for talking about him and praising him to-night; but as certainly we can say nothing new about him.

I shall try to avoid saying some of the old things. In fact, I should not have chosen the subject at all for this audience or this country; but as it is chosen for me, I am proud to respond to your call. I had the honour of knowing Mr. Lincoln a little before his nomination for the Presidency; in fact, of having been among the first, if not the first, of Republican Editors outside his State to propose his nomination in preference to our own State candidate. The acquaintance thus formed never of course became intimate—I was only an unimportant boy; but he was always kind to me, and I continued to see him from time to time till I sat near his bier in the White House, and afterwards watched from the roof of the Treasury the long procession pass through Pennsylvania Avenue and up the Capitol Hill—the ever-renewed procession, that lasted for a fortnight, that swept great cities into its ranks, and crossed half the country, to lay him at last at rest, amid the scenes of his youthful struggles and triumphs.

But never hitherto have I seriously undertaken before any audience, even in my own land, to characterise or to estimate him. The eulogy often seemed to me, at the time of his death and long afterwards, to run into uninformed apotheosis; and sentimentalists, with whom I knew him to have no sympathy, seized upon him, after the manner of their kind, as their own particular hero, for their own particular purposes.

Your concern to-night, Mr. Chairman, is with "The Makers of History in the Nineteenth Century," and you have already dealt with a goodly list. Pardon my Americanism —it is useless for me to attempt disguising it—but do not attribute my judgment merely to that, when without an instant's hesitation I place him far above any other on your shining list—far above Bismarck, who created an Empire; far above Gambetta, who saved a fallen people; or Mazzini, who helped put a new soul in another; or the Marquis Ito, who transformed some hermit islanders into the present first of Asiatic and peer of

European powers. I would not even except the great intellectual and material leader whom you, Mr. Chairman, so worthily presented at the beginning of your course, apostle of that modern science which more and more controls and must control the world; or those two statesmen, the rival glories during the last half century of the British Empire, which each of them ruled in turn, and whose legacies, for good or evil, you are still engaged in distributing. Far be it from me to depreciate or even to estimate the net amount of good which the crucible of time may disclose in its last analysis of the life work by any one of these famous historic figures. I only recognise the present obvious fact, when I put above any or all of them the man who saved for liberty and humanity the greatest Republic of modern times, a Continental Republic of now ninety millions of souls, beside its teeming island dependencies in both hemispheres; the man who crowned this patriotic duty by freeing three millions

of slaves, whom others and not we had enslaved.

In the further remarks concerning Abraham Lincoln which I shall venture to submit, I would like first to strip his name and fame in your minds from the incongruous and imaginary attributes under which so many eulogists have disguised him. Let me say at once then that this untaught offspring of the poor whites of Kentucky was not at the outset and never became that favourite type of some publicists, a retiring citizen, inattentive in general to other interests than those near him, entirely content with private life till roused by an unexpected call to public duty. The Illinois swamps of those days developed no such Cincinnatus amid their malaria. On the contrary, though personally modest and sensitive, he was from his earliest manhood a persistent office-seeker, and the most ambitious of men.

He was not in the least either a simple-minded rustic, or a professional "reformer." On the contrary, he was an ardent partisan,

and the most skilful master of men and of all the intricacies of the game of politics, known in his State.

He had small regard for many of the refinements of the modern Civil Service reformer. He knew how to use the Post Offices to secure delegates, and he was ready enough to point out to his Congressman how a judicious use of other patronage would promote the good cause, at the next Convention. When he came to great place he still used patronage without hesitation,— to advance high public interests, to gain support for the Union cause, to quiet discontent, to promote recruiting. Honesty he insisted on, but beyond that his official standard was not always the highest, and his judgment of individual character not always safe. Thus, in the haste, he appointed many incompetent officers in the army and elsewhere, and often tolerated inefficiency after others had discovered it.

But he was not governed by personal likes and dislikes, and least of all by any remembrance of grievances. During his life at the

bar no other lawyer had ever affronted and wounded him so deeply as Edwin M. Stanton; and the professional conduct was further embittered by unconcealed contempt for his backwoods appearance. Yet, in a critical moment and on the belief that Mr. Stanton could do the work in which his first appointee had not been successful, he did not hesitate to make this contemptuous and, as he thought, arrogant lawyer, his Secretary of War. A highly-trained General whom he had appointed and promoted, tortured him by unexpected delays in the field, and by sending him political letters, kept him waiting long at night in the General's ante-room—even once, it was said, went to bed without seeing him at all. He kept this man in high command, and persisted in "giving him another trial," in spite of halting obedience and frequent failure, long after the Country and the Cabinet called for change. The ablest and most useful member of his Cabinet was used as a rallying point for the disaffection which sought to prevent his renomination,

and this member of his official family finally resigned on a poor question of patronage. He seized the opportunity, a few months later, to appoint that man Chief Justice of the United States.

He was not "perpetually telling humorous and sometimes risqué stories in the White House"; he had no such conception of the duties of a statesman in exalted position and in a time of extreme peril. On the contrary, he probably told fewer stories during his whole stay in the White House than in any previous year of his adult life; and for every one he did tell a hundred poorer and coarser ones were fathered on him. Nor did his stories call for the unctuous and superfluous excuse that they afforded him a needed relief from the sadness of the time. No doubt he was sad in the White House, but he had been sad all his life. The wit and humour with which his stories overflowed were an essential part of his strange frontier nature, as essential as his melancholy, his ready sympathies, or his ambition. He had

no dissipations, and no other amusements; instead of these he told stories from boyhood to admiring comrades; he told them uncommonly well, and in public they always illustrated his argument and helped him carry his point. Nothing, for instance, could have made plainer his view about the unfitness of the Free Soilers to assume the place of a great National party, and, with their one idea, undertake the complex duties of carrying on the government of the country, than his story at Worcester, Massachusetts, as early as 1848, about the Yankee pedlar who had but one pair of trousers in his stock, and commended it to every customer as "large enough to fit any man—and small enough to fit any boy."

He was always the life of every country tavern where he stayed, and his stories on the circuit were as eagerly awaited by the bench and bar as the regular sessions of the Court. Yet at the most critical periods of his life this incessant story-teller was the victim of such melancholia that his friends feared for his reason; always, when not in animated

conversation, he was the most melancholy-looking of men. In the White House, and under the anxieties of the Civil War, he was naturally still more gloomy. To regard this highest and saddest statesman of the century as a mere professional wearer of the cap and bells—to take this sacred name as a convenient decoration for some popular humorist, or for a "joke-smith by trade," to eulogise some such one as "the Abraham Lincoln of American literature"—that is the last indignity from the sentimental school which he distrusted in life, and which thus belittles his blood-earned laurels.

He was not in the early days, and, in fact, he never became a great lawyer—hardly even a thorough one. He did become slowly—he did everything slowly—an unsurpassed jury lawyer, with what some of his professional rivals considered the drawback of being also an honest one. He could not succeed unless he thoroughly believed in his case—and he rarely tried.

He was an intensely religious man, and

knew the Bible better than any other book; his own conduct was governed by an exalted ethical code—as exalted as that of Marcus Aurelius—but he was never a member of any church, and, if the opinions of two of his partners, of his wife, and of some other intimates, can be accepted, he could not be accurately described as a convinced Christian.

He was the great Emancipator, but in politics he was never an Abolitionist—in fact, he distrusted and opposed them and their party. At the beginning of his public career he did not even particularly concern himself with slavery, although he always thought ill of it. He devoted himself to local issues, and he rose first to the favour of his constituents by arguing the navigability of the Sangamon River, and by leading the successful effort for the removal of the State Capital from Vandalia to Springfield, near its banks. When slavery was forced by its friends into State and national politics, he, like most of those around him, disliked, but recognised the authority of the Fugitive

Slave Law. The Boston Abolitionists had that justification, if no other, for their amiable description of him as the Illinois slave-hound. His crowning glory in later years was the fact that, instead of demanding that the law should be defied, or else that the Southern States be encouraged to go off and set up a slave republic for themselves; instead of meanwhile denouncing the Constitution of the United States as a Covenant with Death and an Agreement with Hell—these, I believe, were the restrained expressions of Mr. William Lloyd Garrison—he became the leader of those anti-slavery men who knew how to use, and to persuade the people to use, the forces of a constitutional government, through the political agencies it had created, to promote by peaceful and legal means the greatest cause that could possibly arise under it—in a word, to meet the aggressions of slavery with the political and constitutional triumph of a National anti-slavery party.

I have mentioned some of the distortions with which unwise eulogists and self-seeking

extremists have overlaid the fame of Lincoln. Let me add that there is but one key—save events — to the character of this strange, uncouth, self-educated, gifted and ambitious son of the commonest of the common people. His nature from childhood was one of absolute truthfulness, with himself as well as with others; of absolute honesty, with himself and with others; and of an absolute courage that would face the stake if need be for his convictions of duty. Join to these cardinal traits unconquerable good nature, constant good-will, instinctive sympathy with and understanding of "the plain people," persuasive skill in awaking and patience in awaiting their perceptions of the right, and the most utter democracy of feeling and manners, and you have the qualities that brought him to the front in a pioneer community—that gave him the entire confidence of all classes—that, aided by great talents and tremendous pertinacity, made him the leader of his party at his home, presently in his State, and then in his Country—that always insured him a devoted following, that

led him to enormous power, to the highest achievements, and to a martyr's crown.

He was the child of poor pioneers in a rough settlement of emigrants and adventurers in South-Western Kentucky. They had been cradled amid Indian atrocities. The grandfather was shot dead in sight of his home, and as the savage rushed out from the sheltering woods upon the six year old boy, Thomas Lincoln, who was clinging to the corpse, an older brother saved this future father of the Emancipator by a rifle shot from the cabin. When he grew up, this orphan flotsam rescued from the wreck made by the Indian scalping knife, could not read or write, though his wife afterwards taught him to trace his name and to spell his way painfully a little in the New Testament. Their immortal son was born in a log-cabin, fourteen feet square; and when seven years later the roving parents removed to a remoter wilderness and cheaper land in Southern Indiana, they lived first in a "half-faced-camp," that is to say, in a log-cabin of

which the side to the South was left out, while of course, the lop-sided structure had neither windows nor doors nor floor. The lad had altogether, but in widely separated fragments, considerably less than one year's attendance at school, and the last of this came when he was sixteen years old. The books slowly gathered in his father's cabin were the Bible, Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, Æsop's Fables, Weems' Life of Washington, a small History of the United States, and Robinson Crusoe. Out of these he began digging his education for himself, lying on the floor and reading at night by the light of the blazing logs in the fire-place. From these books and this painful study he developed the extraordinary English style, sometimes quaint but always lucid, convincing and well-nigh perfect, which marks most of his public productions, and rises to such world-classics as the speech at Gettysburg, the letter to the mother of five sons lost in battle, or the close of the Second Inaugural.

Perhaps you will bear with me a moment while I read to you two of these to make

good my bold claim that this untaught young pioneer evolved from his intimate knowledge of the few books I have named a well-nigh perfect English style. It was during the dark days of the war that he wrote this simple letter of sympathy to a bereaved mother:

> "I have been shown, in the files of the War Department, a statement that you are the mother of five sons who have died gloriously on the field of battle. I feel how weak and fruitless must be any words of mine which should attempt to beguile you from your grief for a loss so overwhelming, but I cannot refrain from tendering to you the consolation which may be found in the thanks of the Republic they died to save. I pray that our Heavenly Father may assuage the anguish of your bereavement, and leave you only the cherished memory of the loved and lost, and the solemn pride that must be yours, to have laid so costly a sacrifice upon the altar of Freedom."

What classic author, in our common English tongue, has surpassed that? And next, may I ask what English or American orator has, on a similar occasion surpassed this address on the battlefield of Gettysburg?

Fourscore and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal. Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battlefield of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final resting-place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this. But, in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate—we cannot consecrate—we cannot hallow—this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember, what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honoured dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion—that we here highly resolve that these dead should not have died in vain—that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of

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freedom—and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth."

The pioneer lad, lying on the floor and reading his mother's books by the light of the log-fire, learned something more besides a wonderful English style. He toiled a little, unaided, over English grammar, and sometimes he tried to master the mysteries of multiplication and division by ciphering with a bit of charcoal on the back of the wooden fire-shovel. When this was covered with figures he would shave them off with his father's "draw-shave," and begin again. He grew fast, was unusually strong, and was supposed to work on his father's place. But he snatched eagerly at every chance to listen to the political talk of the elders, to attend the trial of a lawsuit, or to read a borrowed Louisville newspaper; and presently this barefoot, tow-clad boy of fifteen or sixteen was mounting a stump in his father's clearing and giving the others a chance to stop work in order to listen to him trying to

make a speech! His mother died when he was only nine years old; but a step-mother came a year later, who encouraged his efforts, and secured him his last fitful attendance at school.

When nineteen he had grown into a young giant of six feet four. He was always a dutiful and affectionate son, but he was now weary of home routine, and filled with the youthful and frontier lust for wandering. Still he was easily convinced that it was his duty to continue helping the family; and this was made easier by the chance given for service as a flatboat bow-hand, on a trip to New Orleans, at eight dollars a month. He next assisted in another family removal, this time to still newer land, in Illinois. He drove the ox-team through the almost bottomless roads, for a fortnight; helped put up the log-cabin, ploughed fifteen acres of prairie sod and split rails enough to fence it. At last, when he attained his majority, he took odd jobs from others, supported himself, and in his frequent leisure kept up the stump-

speaking habit in the clearings, sometimes with an audience of farm hands, sometimes only to the surrounding stumps or the cattle. Then came another trip down the Mississippi in a flatboat which he helped to build; and incidentally a visit to a slave auction in New Orleans, which led the embryo politician to exclaim to his companions: "Boys, let's get away from this. If I ever get a chance to hit this thing, I'll hit it hard." Much happened first, but the chance came, and the former flat-boatman was as good as his word.

At the outbreak of the Black Hawk War (a defiant return to the State by savages who had agreed to go beyond its borders), the young fellow enlisted, was immediately chosen Captain by the company raised in the neighbourhood, and served till the end. The most serious exploits remembered in his military service were his indignant rescue of a half-starved, unwarlike Indian whom the soldiers were about to kill; and his refusal to betray to deserved discipline some

of his own men who, without his knowledge, had broken into the officers' stores and got drunk on them. The consequent sentence on Captain Lincoln required him to wear a wooden sword for three days in punishment —a sentence to which he submitted with perfect simplicity and composure.

With this episode the record of the pioneer lad, the rail-splitter, flatboatman and volunteer militiaman, now twenty-two years old, is closed. He next takes more vigorously than ever to attending the local courts and making stump speeches; widens his reputation as an inveterate story-teller; resolves to be a lawyer and borrows law books; announces himself as a candidate for the Legislature, and meantime tries to keep a country store for a living. He was defeated for the Legislature, but had the almost solid vote of his own neighbourhood; and he broke up as a merchant, but readily gave his notes for his debts, began paying them off from his first earnings as a lawyer, and finished the process, years afterwards, out of

his Congressional salary. Meantime he worked away by himself over his law books, took any odd job that offered for his board, profited by the prominence his canvass for the Legislature had given him to get appointed Postmaster, and studied land-surveying in borrowed books, in order to be made assistant surveyor. Next year he tried again for the Legislature, and was elected.

When he thus entered upon a public career, he was twenty-five years of age. Eight successive elections to the Legislature, one term in Congress, an unsuccessful effort to get appointed Land Commissioner, an increasing law practice that placed him among the foremost lawyers of the State, several canvasses as the nominee of his party for Presidential elector, then the unsuccessful contest with Stephen A. Douglas for the United States Senate—that gives, in brief, the several steps in this public career up to his election by the new anti-slavery party as President of the United States.

While a private citizen, an outstanding feature of his character was the ingenuous recklessness with which he ran into debt, coupled with the scrupulous, in fact, relentless honesty with which he paid his debts. The first conspicuous feature in his public service, in the Legislature, was an equal readiness to plunge the State into extravagant expenditures for internal improvements, and the same rigid view afterwards as to the duty of payment, coupled with a becoming modesty ever afterwards about his own skill in finance. The next, and far the most important feature in his eight years' work in the Illinois State Capitol, was his invincible determination, in spite of all the adverse personal and political influences by which he was surrounded, to place himself on record against resolutions, overwhelmingly passed by the Legislature, which disapproved of Abolition societies, and declared the right of property in slaves held in the slave-holding States to be sacred. Lincoln's protest, as entered upon the legislative minutes for March 3rd, 1837,

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readily admitted that "the promulgation of abolition doctrines tends rather to increase than abate the evils of slavery"; but it insisted on declaring slavery itself, though just pronounced sacred by the Legislature, to be founded on both injustice and bad policy. For an ordinary politician, this in the Illinois of that day, might have been suicide. For him it was merely notice to all concerned of the line on which he was fully determined to argue the question out. Meantime he went placidly about his business, was forgiven his eccentric declaration of principle, and retained in the confidence of the Whigs till he lost any chances he might have had for re-election to Congress, by equal obstinacy in his opinions concerning the unjust origin of the Mexican War.

During all this period he was encountering the brilliant and popular leader of the Illinois Democracy, Stephen A. Douglas. Sometimes they were rivals in popular elections, constantly in the courts or on the stump. At last the growing pretensions of the slave

power pitted them against each other on a stage which attracted the eyes of the whole nation. The South claimed the right to take slaves with them into the newly organised territories of Kansas and Nebraska. Mr. Douglas undertook to conciliate Northern dislike of this demand by proposing to leave it to a vote of the people in each territory whether they should have slavery or not. Mr. Lincoln refused to be a party to this device for conniving at the possible extension to soil hitherto free of a system which twenty-one years before he had declared, in his defiant protest, to be "founded on both injustice and bad policy."

Mr. Douglas was now a member of the United States Senate, and a candidate for re-election; and already the many mouths of rumor were proclaiming him the next Democratic candidate for the Presidency. Mr. Lincoln's party friends selected him as the strongest man in the State to oppose Mr. Douglas for the Senate, and challenged a joint discussion of the political issues by

the rivals, before popular audiences in all parts of the State. From the day that discussion began, practically all that was left of Mr. Lincoln's life, in peace or in war, lay in this anti-slavery struggle.

The institution that was thus about to take him up and push him forward to power and deathless fame, and was about also to engross all the energies of the whole country, was not introduced to America by its independent people, or even by the British colonists. It had existed on American soil among the Spanish and Portuguese a hundred years before the foot of a slave touched any part of what is now the United States. It had existed fifty years in the British West Indies, before Dutch vessels brought the first cargoes of slaves to the British colony of tobacco planters in Virginia. Washington, Jefferson and all the fathers of the Republic were opposed to it; long after independence, only Georgia and South Carolina insisted on its qualified recognition in the Constitution. Not till the invention of the cotton gin (in

1795) gradually made the slave-grown cotton enormously profitable did most of the Southern States stifle their dislike to it. Yet as late as at the date of the Declaration of Independence, a hundred and ninety-two slave ships were still sailing from Liverpool, London, Bristol and Lancaster, and their united cargo was said to be 47,000 negroes! Not till 1808, a quarter of a century after the acknowledgment of American Independence, did Great Britain attempt to stop this traffic; and not till 1838 did she abolish slavery in her own colonies—just one year *after* this rail-splitter and flat-boatman had staked his early political existence on recording in the Illinois Legislative minutes his denunciation of the injustice of slavery, as against the declaration of most of his colleagues that in the Southern States it was sacred. He lived to make an end of it in his country, only twenty-five years after Great Britain, only fifteen years after France, and in the same year with Holland.

Hardly any discussion before popular audiences in America had ever commanded

such wide attention as the Lincoln-Douglas debate, in their canvass for the Senatorship. It was the first to be reported at such length, verbatim, in the newspapers. As Horace Greeley afterwards exultingly declared, it was the first which was subsequently adopted in full as a campaign document by the defeated side. The Republican leaders seized on it for this purpose, giving Mr. Douglas's speeches as fully and fairly as they did Mr. Lincoln's. It was eagerly read in this form all over the North long after Mr. Lincoln had lost the Senatorship, and throughout the greater Presidential contest that followed.

With the inflexible determination which always marked him when his own mind was clearly made up, and forced him at such times to reject inexorably the advice of even his most trusted friends, Mr. Lincoln twice in that canvass invited his own defeat. In his speech to the State Convention, which nominated him for the Senate, he startled the State and the Nation with these opening sentences:

"If we could first know where we are

and whither we are tending, we could better judge what to do and how to do it. We are now far into the fifth year since a policy was initiated, with the avowed object and confident promise of putting an end to slavery agitation. Under the operation of that policy, that agitation has not only not ceased, but has constantly augmented. In my opinion it will not cease until a crisis shall have been reached and passed. 'A house divided against itself cannot stand.' I believe this Government cannot endure permanently, half slave and half free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved—I do not expect the house to fall—but I do expect it will cease to be divided. It will become all one thing or all the other. Either the opponents of slavery will arrest the further spread of it, and place it where the public mind shall rest in the belief that it is in course of ultimate extinction; or its advocates will push it forward till it shall become alike lawful in all the States, old as well as new, North as well as South."

This momentous declaration had been carefully considered, written out and read to a dozen or more of his most trusted friends. Not one approved of it for the opening of a popular campaign; one, in the blunt fashion of the place and time, burst out with the

declaration that it was a "d——d fool utterance." His life-long and intimate friend, Leonard Swett, wrote him that the first ten lines of his speech defeated him. Another anxious and frightened politician followed him to his office to remonstrate, but got this reply: "If I could save but one thing from the record of my whole life I would choose that speech and save it from the wreck."

Only a few weeks later he amiably, but as obstinately, defied his friends again. Mr. Douglas had just put some questions to him in the first joint debate. Mr. Lincoln replied to them in the second, and in turn put certain questions to Mr. Douglas. These were likewise carefully written out and shown beforehand to his friends. One of them demanded that Douglas should say whether under his Squatter Sovereignty doctrine, a Territorial Legislature could exclude slavery, in spite of the recent Dred Scott decision. His friends begged him not to ask this question, warned him that Douglas would surely seize the opportunity to answer Yes,

and that this would satisfy the opposing anti-slavery sentiment of the State and elect him. "If you ask that question," said his friends almost unanimously, "you can never be Senator." "Perhaps so," he replied, "but I am after larger game. If Douglas does answer Yes, in the face of present Southern demands, he can never be President; and that battle is worth a hundred of this."

His political sagacity was as thoroughly vindicated as his obstinate courage. He did put his question, and did draw out the answer he expected. That answer did elect Douglas to the Senate, but it lost him the friendship of the South. An authority afterwards well known in England, the accomplished Judah P. Benjamin, of Louisiana, told the consequences in open Senate, as early as May, 1860, before the Presidential campaign was fairly begun.

> "The Senator's (Mr. Douglas's) adversary stood upon principle and was beaten; and lo! he is the candidate of a mighty party for the Presidency of the United States. The Senator from Illinois

> faltered. He got the prize for which he faltered; but lo! the grand prize of his ambition slips to-day from his grasp because of his faltering in his former contest; and his success in the canvass for the Senate, purchased for an ignoble price, has cost him the Presidency of the United States."

Lincoln's courageous honesty and his splendid intellectual display in the joint debate thus gave him the Republican National nomination; but the fateful campaign that followed brought a result which Mr. Benjamin probably did not anticipate. It made him President. His unflinching adherence to his convictions had driven or tempted Douglas into a position where he failed for lack of Southern support; and the South into a position where it failed for lack of Northern support, and thus both were presently confronted by a successful anti-slavery party, in constitutional control of the National Government. The South could not take another step for the spread of slavery in the Union. Next, it attempted to break the Union up. To defeat that attempt was the

sworn duty of the President, and it now became Mr. Lincoln's life-long, all-absorbing aim. He had followed legal and constitutional methods till his opponents abandoned them, and made war upon the National Government. Thenceforward he sought to advance on the plain path before him only as far and as fast as he could carry the people with him. This was his distinction —to know the mind of the people, to command their confidence, to persuade them of their high duty, to lead them always, but to lead only as fast as they would follow.

Anti-slavery man, as he had always been by conviction, and anti-slavery President as he was now by election, he realized that his only actual mandate from the people was to resist the efforts of slaveholders to extend that institution over free soil within the Union. But he was not kept long in a waiting attitude. The South hastened to take the initiative. A plot to assassinate him before he could enter Washington to

be inaugurated was detected and thwarted. The Cotton States were already setting up their Secession Confederacy, and the whole South was aflame and defiant. Nevertheless his Inaugural Address was one patient effort to soothe and persuade. He made it perfectly plain that they had not the excuse of any attack from him, present or intended, upon slavery where it already existed, under constitutional sanction, and he closed with this touching appeal:—

> "In *your* hands, my dissatisfied fellow-countrymen, and not in *mine*, is the momentous issue of civil war. The Government will not assail *you*. You can have no conflict without being yourselves the aggressors. *You* have no oath registered in Heaven to destroy the Government, while *I* shall have the most solemn one to 'preserve, protect, and defend it.'"
>
> "I am loth to close. We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained, it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory, stretching from every battlefield and patriot grave, to every living heart and hearthstone

all over this broad land, will yet swell the chorus of the Union, when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature."

The answer to this appeal was the prompt investment of Fort Sumter, in the harbour of Charleston. The mere attempt to supply it with provisions was made the excuse for bombarding and reducing it. "We must sprinkle blood in the faces of the people," said a venerable South Carolinian, impatient at a momentary hesitation before actual firing on the flag of the Union. After that there was no Southern hesitation.

With nearly one-third of the Union thus revolted or revolting, Mr. Lincoln found himself dependent on an army precisely 17,113 strong, officers and men, scattered over the continent, along the Atlantic Coast, in the West, in Texas, New Mexico, Utah, and on the Pacific slope! The day after Sumter surrendered, he called on the States not in revolt for seventy-five thousand volunteers; after the early disasters, Bull Run and the like, he

called, at different times, with the sanction of Congress for a million; twice, later, he called for three hundred thousand more; at the triumphant end he had over a million men in the field under arms.

While the South was rushing into war, Mr. Lincoln was besieged in the White House by the office-seekers, till he was himself driven to a quaint account of his situation. He said he was like a man "living in a house and kept busy renting lodgings at one end of it while he knew the other end was on fire." Not till the 6th Massachusetts, under orders for Washington, had to fight its way through Baltimore, was this investing army of office-seekers scattered. Then the new President found himself isolated in the National Capital for nearly a week, with railway and telegraphic communication cut in every direction; while hundreds of army officers and other employés of the Government deserted their posts and fled South to take up similar positions in the Confederacy; and the air was even filled

with threats of the capture of Mr. Lincoln and the Capital—till at last the 7th New York was able by a circuitous route to come to his relief.

At such a time new and graver perils broke out in the most unexpected quarter. Mr. Lincoln's Secretary of State, a statesman of long service and great national distinction, was reputed his most sagacious and trustworthy adviser. This gentleman had already offered revisions that would have weakened the Inaugural of the untried Illinoisan; had proposed a policy of bravado and probable war with European countries as a means of uniting the distracted nation at home, and had seriously suggested to the new President that his Secretary should be left with practically exclusive power over such momentous and needless additions to the existing dangers. He now submitted a letter of instructions for our Minister to Great Britain, the deservedly distinguished Charles Francis Adams, which was to be laid textually before the British Foreign Minister. This dealt with mere

rumours of Lord John Russell's being ready to see Southern Commissioners unofficially. Mr. Adams was in that case to break off any intercourse, official or unofficial, with the British Government. If the South were recognized, Great Britain was to be told that we had been enemies twice before and must now become so again; while if Great Britain accorded belligerent rights to Confederate privateers, there was an adequate remedy, and we should avail ourselves of it! And, finally, the letter recognized that out of this attitude war might come "with one, two, or even more European nations." This last was certainly correct. From such a document, so submitted, war between our two countries at least might easily have arisen. Mr. Lincoln, the prairie State politician, absolutely inexperienced in either executive or diplomatic work, and already environed with a flood of new and startling difficulties, nevertheless without hesitation again overruled his accomplished Secretary of State, modified with his own pen the belligerent

instructions, and saved a dangerous if not fatal mis-step. Mr. Lincoln did this alone.

Once again he helped avert a similar calamity for the United States and Great Britain, but this time he had an advantage in following up the previous work of an exalted personage, whose memory is sacred here, and almost equally revered beyond the Atlantic. You recall the story of the Southern Commissioners, taken by force from the British packet "Trent." The high statesmanship, as well as the good-will to America, shown by the late Queen Victoria, in the modification of Lord John Russell's dispatch on that subject, is well known. You may not be so familiar with the fact that on the day Mr. Lincoln received news of the seizure of Messrs. Mason and Slidell, he said, "I fear the traitors will prove to be white elephants. We must stick to American principles concerning the rights of neutrals. We fought Great Britain for insisting, by theory and practice, on the right to do precisely what Captain Wilkes has done. If Great Britain

should now protest, we must give them up and apologise for the act as a violation of our doctrines." At the moment Mr. Lincoln said that, his Cabinet was sharing the general satisfaction of the country at the seizure. But these excited, though old and experienced advisers, finally accepted his view. After the protracted Cabinet discussions, Mr. Seward wrote an admirable reply to the letter Queen Victoria had modified, and concluded it with the statement that "the four persons in question will be cheerfully liberated." Two great heads of State, from their independent positions, and without knowledge by either of what the other would do, unconsciously co-operating in a crisis of the utmost gravity, had kept the peace between the two branches of the English-speaking race.

The war into which the South drove Mr. Lincoln in their effort to break up the Union was at first sustained by the Northern people at large only as a war to maintain the Union; they could not have been united in

its support for any wider purpose. He would not therefore permit it to be diverted from that character — would not let it appear as a movement on his part to abolish or even to injure slavery where that institution had an admittedly legal existence under the Constitution. He was even anxious to keep the Confiscation Act against the escaping slaves of rebels from bearing the appearance of a plan to turn the war into an abolition channel. Not till he was sure that the conservative masses of the North realized the necessity, was he willing to use this power, already put in his hands, against slavery within its old limits. His extreme caution exasperated many of his supporters ; and after the disastrous campaigns through which the war dragged its weary way in the first and second years, Horace Greeley, his old colleague in the only Congress in which either of them ever served, impatiently addressed to him in print "The Prayer of Twenty Millions," insisting that attempts to put down the rebellion and yet uphold its inciting cause must be futile, and

demanding the enforcement of laws which fully authorised him to free large classes of slaves. Mr. Lincoln immediately replied, through the press, in a letter to Mr. Greeley:

"As to the policy I 'seem to be pursuing,' as you say, I have not meant to leave any one in doubt. I would save the Union. I would save it in the shortest way under the Constitution.

"My paramount object is to save the Union, and not either to save or destroy Slavery.

"If I could save the Union without freeing any slave, I would do it—if I could save it by freeing all the slaves, I would do it—and if I could save it by freeing some and leaving others alone, I would also do that.

"What I do about Slavery and the Coloured Race, I do because I believe it helps to save this Union; and what I forbear, I forbear because I do not believe it would help to save the Union.

"I have here stated my purpose according to my views of official duty; and I intend no modification of my oft-expressed personal wish that all men everywhere could be free."

This patience, moderation, transparent candour had exactly the effect he desired in consolidating the wavering sentiment of the

North into a conviction that the only way to save the Union was to destroy slavery. Of his right to do it, in time of war, as Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Navy, and under the war powers of the Constitution, he never had the slightest doubt; what he waited and watched for was evidence that the people were coming up to his own feeling of the necessity. Meantime, he replied to similar appeals in the same spirit, skilfully stating every objection so as to draw out the popular opinion. This kind of discussion with delegations to the White House went on for a month. It was on the 22nd of August he sent Horace Greeley the statement just quoted. On the 22nd of September the Nation was electrified with a Proclamation offering gradual and compensated emancipation to all Slave States not in rebellion at the next meeting of Congress, and where this offer should not be accepted, declaring all slaves free forever, from the 1st of January following.

Even yet he was in advance of the people. In the autumn elections following

this Proclamation, his opponents wrested from him the States of New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana and Illinois, while many other States also showed grave losses for his party. But he never wavered, and he had not misjudged the opportunity. He redoubled his efforts to sustain the army and navy, enforced demands for more troops, even at the ultimate cost of draft riots in New York, banished Vallandigham, the most audacious Northern sympathiser with the war against the Union, conciliated as far as possible his supporters in every State, bore up under repeated defeats in the field, tried new commanders where old ones continued to fail, and then waited with what patience he could on Generals who still did not fight or did not win victories.

Finally he pushed Grant and Sherman forward against Vicksburg, and Meade with the Army of the Potomac against Lee; and at last, on the following Fourth of July, he heard in the thunders answering each other

across the Union from Gettysburg to Vicksburg, that his daring and noble Proclamation was made good.

You all know the sequel. The Mississippi soon flowed again unvexed to the sea. Sherman marched through Georgia. Grant fought his way to the defences of Richmond. Republican discontent disappeared, and the War President was re-elected. The spirit in which the worn leader of his people accepted the new power they had conferred, shines through the tender words with which his second Inaugural was closed:

> "Fondly do we hope, fervently do we pray, that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondsman's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, 'The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.' With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive to finish the work we are in, to bind up the Nation's

> wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan, to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and a lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations."

I am only here to tell what this man was, and what he did;—not to offer any eulogy upon him. If one were needed what nobler eulogy could be uttered than the simple statement that after such a strain and such trials, with final triumph plainly in sight, he uttered those words and felt as he spoke. You have rightly selected him as the chief American maker of history in the Nineteenth Century. The world long ago chose another as our chief maker of history in the Eighteenth Century. Both were typical products of your own race, as developed in new surroundings, in that conflict with wild nature and wild men which has subdued a continent to the highest uses of civilization. Both were human; neither was entirely exempt from the weaknesses of humanity. But whether for

patient fortitude and final success in war, or for wise leadership of a great people in peace, I venture to think George Washington and Abraham Lincoln not inferior to any sons of the race, born in those centuries, under any skies. Nay more, I venture to think that in the whole long and glorious history of that race, while its history was ours as well as yours, they have never been surpassed.

APPENDIX.

UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM.

Course of Lectures on

MAKERS OF HISTORY IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.

Arranged by the Joint Committee of the University and the W.E.A.

The following Lectures have been arranged to be given in the Medical Theatre at the University, Edmund Street, at 8.15 p.m. :—

October 19th.—"Lord Kelvin," by Sir Oliver Lodge, F.R.S.
Chairman : Professor Poynting.

October 26th.—"Bismarck," by Professor Beazley.
Chairman : J. Cuthbertson, Esq.

November 2nd.—"Gambetta," by Percy Ashley, Esq., M A.
Chairman : Professor Chatelain.

November 9th.—"Disraeli," by A. D. Steel-Maitland, Esq., M.P.
Chairman : Councillor Norman Chamberlain, Esq.

November 16th.—"Gladstone," by Canon Masterman.
Chairman : Sir George Kenrick.

November 23rd.—"Mazzini," by Mrs. Osler.
Chairman : Professor J. H. Muirhead.

November 30th.—"Prince Ito," by K. Yoshizawa, Esq., First Secretary to the Japanese Embassy.
Chairman : Professor W. J. Ashley.

The closing Lecture in the Midland Institute, Paradise Street, Birmingham :—

December 7th.—"Abraham Lincoln," by the Hon. Whitelaw Reid, American Ambassador.
Chairman : Sir Oliver Lodge, F.R.S., Principal of the University.

From the *Birmingham Daily Post*, Thursday, December 8th, 1910 :—

Last night, at the Midland Institute, the last of the series of "Makers of History" lectures, arranged by the Joint Committee of the University and the Workers' Educational Association, was held. The lecturer was his Excellency the Hon. Whitelaw Reid,

and his subject was "Abraham Lincoln." There was a crowded audience. Sir Oliver Lodge presided, and amongst those present were Lady Lodge, Mrs. Reid and Mrs. Joseph Chamberlain.

On the motion of Sir Oliver Lodge, seconded by Mr. Arthur Eades, a cordial vote of thanks was passed to the Hon. Whitelaw Reid for his lecture. Mr. Reid briefly acknowledged the vote, and expressed his personal gratification at having been able to treat such a subject before an audience composed in part of the representatives of the Birmingham Workers' Educational Association.

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